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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USOSCE 000112

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: RAPID REACTION FORCES PROPOSALS: THE STATE OF PLAY

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Classified By: Hugh M. Neighbour, Chief Arms Control Delegate, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Russia on April 22 seemed to accept that the Quad Allies need a few more weeks to come up with a concrete response to its proposal for an information exchange on rapid reaction forces. Meanwhile, Britain, France, and Germany insist that the U.S. justify its contention that Germany's draft counter-proposal, not yet shown outside the Quad, would duplicate provisions in the adapted CFE Treaty. They are also openly concerned whether the U.S. can deliver on finding a "new approach" that would capture information on Russian forces not presently available to Allies. They suspect a U.S. counter-proposal would actually constitute a new measure that would contradict HLTF guidance. The other Quad members are ready to answer Russia with the current German counter-proposal, and want a favorable U.S. response or U.S.-proposed changes to their plan soon. End summary.

Meeting with Russia - Successful Stall for Time

12. (C) Quad Allies met with Belarus and Russia April 22 to stall for more time to respond to the latter's rapid reaction forces (RRF) information exchange proposal, first tabled in the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) in December 12006. Allies said they were still consulting with each other and, while they could not make any promises, expected to have something concrete to propose to Russia soon. Russia regretted there was still nothing concrete from the Quad, having repeatedly put off the discussion because the Allies were not ready. Nonetheless, Russia indicated it could wait a few more weeks. The meeting went as well as it could, at least for the Quad, particularly given that the four allies did not promise anything other than to continue working the issue.

Skepticism of U.S. "New Approach"

¶3. (C) Meanwhile, Germany, France, and Britain in turn are waiting for the U.S. to deliver on its hint of a "new approach" to the RRF proposal, which we understand might, for starters, attempt to capture information about peace keeping forces (PKF). Although the U.S. has not produced a written counter-proposal, it has told the other Quad members that Washington is considering a number of ideas that would make the RRF proposal more reciprocal and balanced.

¶4. (C) Allies reacted with skepticism to this news and irritation at what they perceive as a U.S. failure to focus on an important issue, commenting that the U.S. may now have reversed itself by considering a "new CSBM" that could be contrary to HLTF guidance and the Allies' long-standing position in Vienna. After long discussion, however, Britain's delegation here agrees that incorporating PKF would not violate HLTF guidance and, once it sees a U.S. proposal, expects to be willing to try to convince Germany of this.

¶5. (C) Germany, in particular, does not see a good reason to include PKF in a measure addressing RRF, and wants to know how Allies could deliver information on PKF operating outside of the mandate of NATO or EU, as in the case of the UN in Cyprus. Germany still believes its draft counter-proposal, meant to replace the original Russian proposal, would give NATO and the EU more information on CSTO activities than vice versa. (Note: Rev. 2, the current version, emailed to VCI/CCA April 17, reflects substantial British, but not U.S., input. End note.)

Allied Insistence on Offense as Good Defense

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¶6. (C) Britain, France, and Germany see an Allied counter-proposal, such as that developed by Germany, as the only way to rebut the Russian proposal. They do not want the FSC to be working from Russia's paper, but seek to replace it with a Quad counterproposal. Simply saying no will not work any more, they insist. They are also concerned that such a refusal could risk Russia's acquiescence in other areas of security cooperation at the OSCE, such as Afghanistan.

Allies Reject U.S. View that German Paper Duplicates A/CFE

¶7. (C) The other three Quad members are clearly impatient with what they see as U.S. indecision, and decline to accept the U.S. contention that operative paragraphs (OP) 1 and 3 of the German non-paper (Rev. 2, the current version), would duplicate parts of the adapted CFE Treaty (A/CFE). Operative paragraph 1 provides for provision of information on RRF deployments; OP 3 encourages provision of additional information voluntarily through the Vienna Document. The other Quad members are insistent that the German counter-proposal will have no impact if it is reduced to nothing more than the FSC chair "seeking" briefings on RRF per OP 2, as the U.S. has recommended. They also say it would not have the desired impact if it only covers PKO and does not address RRF.

¶8. (C) In the absence of details the support U.S. concerns, the other Quad members are now unified on the position that the information exchange described in the German paper would not duplicate A/CFE. They explain that the proposal would not require exact numbers of treaty limited equipment but would instead permit "aggregate" quantities of troops and major weapons and equipment.

¶9. (C) The Quad allies also argue that any information provided would not be in a formalized CFE or A/CFE-style notification, but in any format of the provider's choosing, including briefings. All three allies argue that the

information to be provided is readily available, often widely known shortly after a deployment, not classified, and would not jeopardize the success of an RRF mission. If the U.S. cannot accept OP 1, then the three others expect an alternative proposal from us.

SCOTT